# **Lower Lockyer Irrigation Forum**

## **Held: 7:00pm on 3 April 2017 at Lowood**

**Attendees:** 24 irrigation customers were in attendance

The meeting commenced at 7:15pm.

**Agenda Item 1 – Welcome & Introduction**

Customers were reminded that the 2016-17 Lower Lockyer Valley Water Supply Scheme Network Service Plan was available on Seqwater’s website and the 2017-18 plan would be available from 30 September 2017 (see <http://www.seqwater.com.au/water-supply/irrigation/lower-lockyer-valley-water-supply-scheme>). The Network Service Plans contain useful information regarding operating costs, renewals and water usage history for the scheme.

Customers without internet access who wish to receive a copy of the existing plan, and/or request the new plan when it is available, were asked to register their interest by phone (1800 077 005).

**Agenda Item 2 – Review of 2016-17 operations & operations outlook for 2017-18**

Seqwater advised that during 2016-17, the damaged outlet valve at O’Reilly’s Weir was repaired. It was planned that maintenance activities would be carried out on Brightview Channel to ensure it would perform properly when water availability returned.

The question arose as to why the Buaraba Creek Diversion Weir inlet valve was opened during the large rainfall event on 30/31 March 2017. Seqwater advised that when water ceases to flow over Buaraba Ck Diversion Weir, the ability to divert any water into Atkinson Dam is limited and eventually ceases. At that point, the inlet valve is opened in order to supply water licence holders in the section of Buaraba Creek between the Diversion Weir and the Buaraba Creek pipeline (which is where water from Atkinson Dam is released).

Customers were reminded that the costs involved in maintaining the infrastructure are still incurred even if no water is delivered and therefore the fixed Part A charges continue to apply during times of low or no announced allocation. Customers who are experiencing financial hardship should contact Seqwater to discuss options.

The meeting was advised that Seqwater had received phone calls from some customers enquiring about rebates. Seqwater advised that drought assistance packages may be available to eligible allocation holders through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries once a region has been drought declared.

**Agenda Item 3 – Review of 2016-17 renewals and renewals outlook for 2017-18**

As per the 2016-17 renewals program budget, the Atkinson Dam water treatment plant was downgraded to non-potable supply and treated water tank and chemical shed were decommissioned. The project to replace 24 flow meters that was commenced in 2015-16 was completed in 2016-17.

Seqwater advised that the 2017-18 works program includes piping repairs in both Potters and Sippels weirs. Low cost repairs have already been carried out which has reduced the leaking but has not provided a permanent solution. Consequently, more extensive repairs are now required and have been added to the program. A significant cost will be access for the heavy machinery into the creek and the resulting bank restoration works.

The meeting was advised that another 10 new flow meters will be installed throughout the scheme. Patent approved meters are currently being tested. These meters remain accurate with less piping required before and after the meter which is anticipated to bring costs down.

**Agenda Item 4 – Announced Allocation 2017-18**

The formula for determining the announced allocation (AA) is defined in the Resource Operations Plan (ROP) and this was explained in more detail. Attendees were advised that due to the recent inflows, the AA was being recalculated and was likely to be reset to 10% for the 2016-17 water year. However if there are no further inflows between now and 30 June, the forecast AA for the start of the new water year on 1 July was likely to be 0%. Seqwater advised that any time the AA is less than 100%, it will be reviewed at the beginning of each month (or after significant inflows) to determine if it can be increased. Current inflows to Atkinson Dam were likely to raise the AA to 10% for the remainder of the water year.

**Agenda Item 5 – Water Supply Outlook**

Greg Banff, spokesman for the Lockyer Water Users Forum (LWUF), addressed the meeting and advised that the LWUF had spoken to the Dept of Natural Resources & Mines (DNRM) and Dept of Energy & Water Supply (DEWS) about the possibility of diverting water from Wivenhoe Dam to the Lockyer Valley. Further discussions to secure a water entitlement are continuing and consultants have been engaged to provide costings and socio-economic assessments. Greg advised that there is bipartisan support within government for the project. LWUF advised that they were developing a communication list for those who wanted to be kept up to date with what is happening.

**Agenda Item 6 – Irrigation water price path going forward**

The current price path ends 30/06/2017 however as advised previously, the next price path has been deferred for two years to align the Seqwater & SunWater price paths and to allow SunWater to enter into arrangements regarding their distribution systems.

Seqwater advised that the government will issue a new pricing notice soon and it is expected that the current pricing will continue with increases of $2 per ML per annum plus CPI for Part A and CPI for Part B. These increases are expected to continue each year until 30 June 2019.

Seqwater advised that the current actual scheme expenditure is tracking well against the forecast expenditure used to determine the current price path.

Whilst there is no official budget for the renewals, Seqwater explained that the price path includes an annuity component. The annuity is calculated by forecasting the projected scheme expenses for the next 20 years and then converting that figure to a flat cost per annum.

Seqwater explained that renewals planning is done far into the future and is based on the average life expectancy of an asset. Closer to the time, condition assessments are done to determine if the asset really needs to be replaced having regard to its age, how it is performing and whether any legislative changes require it to be replaced. Where possible, if the asset is in good condition its life is extended. Once the next pricing review program is known, Seqwater intends to consult with irrigators on its full 30 year renewal program that will be submitted for review.

**Agenda Item 7 – Future consultations, other matters**

The matter of zone caps was raised in relation to water trading however it was acknowledged that this is a matter for discussion with DNRM.

Customers can find more information about the scheme on the Seqwater website under Everyday Water/Irrigation Schemes/Lower Lockyer Water Supply Scheme.

Seqwater will continue to hold forums every 12 months unless they are needed more frequently.

**Agenda Item 10 – Meeting close**

With all agenda items completed, the meeting was closed.